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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the enactive method, an alternative approach to introducing and teaching reading to young hearing impaired children. The method actively involves the child as a processor of the material rather than as a passive consumer. The approach is established for a short period of time each day until the student outgrows its original purpose. The teacher and child manipulate concrete objects within a setting, representing real-life or pretend situations, based on the child's interest and experiences. The child tells the story of the action, which is then recorded to serve as the basis of reading instruction. Advantages of the approach include its direct relation to recent experiences, its encouragement of creativity, its stimulation of language, the flexibility it promotes in grouping, and its perception by children as fun. Planning information centers on materials and sequences of lesson plans. Sample lesson plans are appended. (CL)

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# Encouraging reading through an enactive method: Strategies for hearing impaired children

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Encouraging reading through an enactive method:
Strategies for hearing impaired children.

All children have the need to read and understand the standard language of their community. Reading is one of the major avenues of communication and is essential for an adequate and meaningful existence in our complex society. The transition to literacy has been shown to be a problem for all children, requiring a lengthy apprenticeship of both formal and informal instruction (Chall, 1967; Flesch, 1966; Cook-Gumperz, 1977). Reading difficulty is the major cause of school retardation, between ten and fifteen percent of the general school age population have reading problems (Harris and Sipay, 1980). However, hearing children generally approach the task equipped with cognitive, linguistic and perceptual skills that support reading. Hearing impaired children do not generally possess such a firm foundation on which to build.

Such severe and general reading retardation exists among the hearing impaired population that the problems these students face in learning to read are by now legendary. Most hearing impaired pupils fail to acquire

reading skills comparable to those of hearing children of the same age (Fusfeld, 1955; Balow, Fulton and Peploe, 1971); it is not common for deaf children to read beyond the fourth grade level (Furth, 1966; Gibson and Levin, 1975; Trybus and Karchmer, 1977). The greatest difficulty appears to lie in the amorphous area of reading comprehension (Clarke, Rogers and Booth, 1982). This reading retardation places the majority of hearing impaired students at a distinct educational disadvantage in terms of the literacy skills. In addition, it presents an unresolved challenge to those involved in the education of hearing impaired students.

LaSasso (1978) has classified the variables that may account for the low level of functioning into two main areas: learner variables such as the nature and level of linguistic, cognitive and decoding functioning of the reader and environmental variables which include the type of educational setting, the instructional methods and the materials employed to teach reading to hearing impaired students.

In the past, the bulk of researcher's attention has been on learner variables. Investigators have attempted to

discover the reasons underlying the general poor reading performance of hearing impaired students by focussing upon the pathology of deafness. The implication was that something basically wrong existed within the child which inhibited or precluded efficient acquisition of literacy skills (Gormley and McGill Franzen, 1978).

Later research has viewed the problems of differential acquisition of literacy skills as not due to deficits within the hearing impaired child but rather, at least in part, to deficits within the system. Some major areas of investigation have been reading interest (Brooks, 1971; Chall, 1967; Shrayer, 1968); reading attitudes (Jacobson and Johnson, 1967; Maxwell, 1974); individual reading programs (McCarr, 1973); alternative materials (Anken and Holmes, 1977) and achievement and diagnostic testing (Ewoldt, 1982).

As well, a number of investigators have studied the reading materials employed with hearing impaired pupils. While LaSasso (1978) found that the majority of North American schools for the deaf use basal readers as a primary instructional approach, teachers of the hearing impaired have expressed dissatisfaction with the packaged materials. Basal readers have been criticzed for their linguistic

difficulties (Fleming, 1967; Gillespie, 1983; Schotanus, 1967); their lack of firmly established language structures (Crandall, 1978); the poor sequential development of specific language structures (Kachuck, 1975; Page, 1978); their lack of vocabulary control (Hargis, 1970; Johns, 1976; Page, 1978) and their stress on a phonics approach (Stassen, 1973).

The mismatch between the language of reading materials and the language that the child brings to the reading process has also been thoroughly addressed by Quigley and his associates (Quigley and Power, 1972; Quigley, Wilbur, Power, Montanelli and Steinkamp, 1976). Quigley, Power and Steinkamp (1977) concluded that research and instruction in reading for deaf children should concentrate on the modification of reading materials in the early stages and a greater understanding of the psychological processes involved in deaf children's learning to read (Quigley, 1982).

Reading is a complex skill to both learn and to teach. It is not really known how hearing impaired children learn to read (Clarke, Rogers and Booth, 1982). Even young deaf adults, when asked the queston, have difficulty in

explaining how it happened to them (Carlsen, 1985). Moreover, there is no agreement as to the best way to teach reading to hearing impaired children. There exists a general lack of concensus on a reading theory or model and there appears to be no preferred or particularly successful approach. Indeed, Clarke, Rogers and Booth (1982) describe the current state of instructional methodology as one of confused eclecticism.

The structuring of communication in the classroom is the responsibility of the teacher. The ultimate goal of the reading program is to enable children to read generally available materials with ease. Given the less than spectacular success, despite dedicated and tireless efforts, teachers must seek alternate methods to stimulate and hone reading skills and develop an appreciation of reading in their hearing impaired charges.

The purpose of this paper is to explain and discuss one such alternate approach to the introduction and teaching of reading to young hearing impaired children - the enactive method. This paper presents an outline of the method, suggestions for implementation in an elementary classroom and outlines planning and presentation of enactive reading

lessons. A videotape, showing one type of enactive activity in use with hearing impaired children, accompanies this paper.

## The enactive approach to reading for hearing impaired children

The enactive method, loosely based on Bruner's developmental stages, was devised and developed by Berrice Ryan at the Sagonasta Training Centre for teachers of the hearing impaired in Belleville, Ontario. The approach has been widely field tested with hearing impaired children and has been successfully used with children with delayed language and native Indian youngsters. Currently, the approach is employed in a number of Canadian centres for the hearing impaired.

The enactive method is a dynamic and flexible approach to teaching reading. Enactive means "to act upon", and the major learning outcome of the method is the spontaneous generation of sentence forms. The method actively involves the child. It ensures that she is a processor of the material she will read rather than a passive consumer. It allows the child to make sense of written information in terms of her recent experiences.

The enactive method is only one small part of the total language program. It is a structured approach which is set up for a short period of time each day until the child outgrows its original, intended purpose (Wesenger [1979]). While it is a formal technique, it simulates natural situations and allows for creative thinking from the child.

In the enactive method, the child and the teacher manipulate concrete objects within a setting. These actions express and represent real life situations and activities or fictional and "pretend" situations. The materials and objects are chosen to align with the child's major interests, and his ongoing personal experiences; the subjects chosen must correspond to that which the child can related to his own actions and thoughts.

The setting and materials may be chosen and constructed by the teacher although they can be made by the class. They are related to some experience of the child's. These include such areas as a teacher-told story, a poem, a class outing, a special treat, a theme, television characters or special days.

As the objects are manipulated within the setting, the child tells the "story" of the action. This is recorded on

a chart and later by the child to serve as part of the basis of reading instruction.

Some considerations on the enactive approach.

1. Enactive is a flexible approach.

The approach is child-centered and capitalizes upon the child's own language and experiences. The material is based on the youngster's own levels of vocabulary and language structure acquisition. Adjustments are steadily made as the student's vocabulary and language increase and expand.

2. Enactive is directly related to recent experiences.

Every child brings to her reading a unique field of concepts, ideas and opinions. Comprehension problems, which are endemic among hearing impaired readers, may be related to some deficiency in the child's experiential background. The principle of using manipulative objects and basing reading upon these experiences may aid in minimizing comprehension difficulties.

The enactive method is not just another teaching-learning device. It provides built-in experiences that cannot be fully provided in any other way for many of our children (Wesenger [1979]).

3. Enactive stimulates language development.

As well as providing the hearing impaired child with familiar, predictable content in his reading, the enactive method encourages language development and vocabulary expansion. It must be used daily with children who do not spontaneously generate sentences as well as with those children who are ready to learn additional ingredients of sentences (Wesenger [1979]).

4. Enactive encourages creativity

The enactive approach, by using the child's manipulation of mterials and own experiences and language, encourages the youngster to express her ideas, develop creativity and see these ideas in written form. It develops positive self-concept by accepting the child's ideas and by making these the area of importance.

5. The enactive method is a structured strategy and forms one very important part of a total language environment (Wesenger [1979]).

Ryan (1985) views the enactive technique as a specialized method for structuring the five basic sentence patterns.

6. Enactive allows a focus on pragmatic and communicative

functions.

In this method, the child chooses the language that is appropriate for the situation. The teacher can also adapt to allow role reversal, role playing and third party message analysis.

7. Enactive allows flexibility in grouping.

Generally, this approach is most successful when used with one or two children, not an entire class. Children can be grouped according to their language competence.

8. Enactive is useful with a wide age range.

Although the enactive method was designed to introduce and teaching reading to young hearing impaired children, the method has been successfully adapted for older students. Young teenagers with severe language and reading delays have reacted favorably to the method when used as a supplementary approach to teaching reading.

9. Enactive is one part of the total language curriculum.

An enactive program is not designed as the sole or primary approach to the teaching of reading skills to hearing impaired children. It is a supplementary approach that should be used for a short period - ten minutes maximum - with individuals or small groups of children daily.

10. Enactive can be a vital component of integrated programming.

The setting and the objects which are used in an enactive approach may be chosen by the teacher in order to teach a specific language structure or reading skill. It can also be based upon other curricula areas - a story, poem, class outing, theme, science project or social studies unit. The variations in implementation depend only upon the creativity of the teacher.

11. Enactive allows continual diagnosis and evaluation.

With the daily reading and writing that is vital in the enactive approach, the teacher can consistently diagnose problem areas and evaluate progress. In addition, the child is given continued and structured review until mastery is achieved.

12. Enactive method is fun.

Our experience shows that children enjoy this approach and are motivated to learn.

Planning an enactive approach.

Materials

In the enactive approach, concrete objects are manipulated by the children and teacher within a setting. The objects are moved so that they interact with each other. The materials and objects must be prepared with a view to the interests of the child and his ongoing personal experiences. The objects must be of a size to be manipulated easily while the type and number of objects depends upon the objectives of the activity and the maturity and needs of the child.

The setting in which the objects are placed and manipulated are designed to coincide with the situations. As pointed out, the setting can be simple or complex and may relate to other themes or class activities. The settings and objects may be constructed and presented by the teacher or made by the children. Settings may include ideas such as a park, a playground, an Indian village, a camping scene, a

castle for King Arthur, an aquarium for treasure hunting in the sea or a racing circuit for a steeplechase (Wesenger [1979]).

For example, the teacher may wish to stress the vocabulary and language that the child needs in the playground. The setting would be a simple model of the playground. It needs to be portable so can be constructed on a piece of board. To show a playground or park, the teacher may use "grass," "trees", "benches", and a wading pool, all easily made with colored cardboard and cloth. The objects within this setting which the child and the teacher will manipulate may include a slide and swings and toy figures. More objects will be introduced as the lessons proceed and the child's vocabulary and language increases.

Planning the lessons.

Wesenger [1978] has outlined a series of lessons related to implementing a series of enactive lessons. She suggests the following steps:

1. Select an enactive setting that is of interest to the child, is within her experience and presents good possibilities for the objects to interact.

a) To introduce the lesson, the teacher presents the setting with a few objects and handles them while discussing the objects with the child. The teacher then describes an action, after manipulating the objects. He records the sentence on chart paper. This continues until a sequence of sentences are recorded. The teacher then helps the child to read the sentences.

b) On the next day, the child manipulates the objects. She makes her statement which is repeated by the teacher and then recorded on a chart. After a sequence of sentences are recorded, the teacher helps the child to read the material. The child then copies the story into his book and illustrates all or part of it.

c) This procedure is followed for the period of use of the setting, generally about ten days. As the lessons proceed, new manipulative objects are gradually introduced.

d) The child's full story is then recorded into a teacher-made book to serve as reading material for the child.

2. The above procedure is most suitable for children in grade three and above. Although the objectives and steps in the enactive approach are similar for very young children, the procedure is slightly different. The setting selected

should be one that is familiar to the child and two adults should participate.

a) The teacher manipulates the objects to make a simple action and says the sentence. The second adult repeats this procedure exactly. The child is then helped to manipulate the objects in the same way. One adult provides the same sentence while the second adult writes it. This is done until three or four sentences are recorded.

b) On the next day, the child is encouraged to manipulate the objects and to tell his ideas. As one adult puts the child's ideas into a sentence, the other adult writes it. The sentences are then read with the child. Depending upon the age of the child he can overcopy the sentences or the teacher can copy them into his book. It is important that the child illustrate his ideas.

c) At the final lesson, have the child "read" his story to other class members or have him choose someone to read his story (Wesenger [1979]).

Enactive lesson plans (video)

Topic: Goldilocks and the three bears. Theme story.

Objectives: while manipulating the objects, the teacher will present SP III (N.P. + state verb + adj.) using new adjectives - big, medium, little; hard, soft, too soft; and hot, warm, cold.

: through manipulation of the objects, the child will create his own sentences.

: after completing manipulation, the child will re-read and record the sentences.

: through the enactive materials and the re-written books, interest in reading will be stimulated.

Materials : figures and pieces from story, chart paper, paper for recording story, re-written book.

Day 1. Introduction.

1. On the table lay out beginning pieces - house, Goldilocks, chairs.

Use pieces to tell beginning of story.

e.g. This is a house.

This is a girl.

Her name is Goldilocks.

She goes into the house.

2. With children talk about girl, chairs - draw their ideas.

3. Introduce the structure.

Say This is Goldilocks. Record on chart.

This is a big chair. Record on chart.

This is a medium chair. Record on chart.

This is a little chair. Record on chart.

4. Have children read back chart story using objects as cues if necessary.

Day 2.

1. Lay out Goldilocks, chairs. Guide children to give sentences about these. Let them manipulate, play, do action and give sentences. Correct and model sentences, record on chart (4 sentences).

2. Child read back story.

3. Record story.

Day 3. Lay out Goldilocks, chairs and add porridge bowls.

1. Same procedure as yesterday but give adjectives hot, warm, cool plus bowl, porridge.

2. Elicit 4 sentences, record on chart.

3. Children read back.

4. Record.

Day 4.

1. Teacher begins by using chairs, gives his story and then discards.

2. Teacher adds beds and discusses with children.

3. Continue to set sentences, record, read, write.

Lessons would continue until whole story is complete.

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